

What we're looking for in the classroom

8/25/09

Form A:
#2, #5

1. Evidence of 'begin with the end in mind' thinking in unit / lesson design. *Whether you use the approach of Understanding by Design or another framework to successfully determine the 'big ideas' of your unit, they should be clear to the teacher and students. Form learning expectations from standards and benchmarks, and build a quality assessment based on those benchmarks. Then, do everything you can to help students meet those expectations.*

Form B:
C1

2. Goal / objective is visible to students, preferably on the board. *This seemingly simple step is too often skipped, but it represents one of the easiest, high-leverage methods for raising and sustaining student engagement in a standards-based instruction environment.*

Form B:
B4

3. Enforce behavior expectations. *Every teacher should have classroom rules which are clear and spell out consequences. While this step is necessary, it isn't sufficient. Those students who talk constantly, need to be told multiple times to be take off their I-Pod, and consistently misbehave? We've seen them behave in other teachers' classes. The difference is the degree to which the teacher exerts his or her will and sets the tone for what will be tolerated, then holds students accountable.*

Form B:
C2

4. Active student involvement in learning activities. *One of the best-supported axioms in all the literature and research about student learning is that students learn better (more deeply, actually processing and retaining the information and skills) when they are actively involved in it. At the high end of the 'effective' continuum are classrooms in which teachers insist on active student involvement and plan activities which demand it. Degree of involvement isn't a matter of teaching style; it is foundational to learning.*

Form B:
C2, C3

5. Review of prior knowledge. *Whether you use a bell-ringer activity, a quick check of homework, or a simple, visual cue for students, reminding them of what they've already learned is essential.*

Form B:
C4

6. Quality questioning. *One of the easiest things to observe is questioning, with the following two components in mind: First, is questioning conducted in such a way that the teacher can see how much everyone is learning? Or are merely those with hands raised first -- or answers shouted out -- called on frequently? Second, are you stimulating higher-order thinking with your questions, or merely asking knowledge-level recall questions?*

Form B:
B2

7. Rapport with students. *Establish rapport and build it inside and outside of the classroom. The need to learn is lower in a student's hierarchy of needs than the need to be around adults who demonstrate they care about them as people. In fact, for children of poverty, a relationship with you as a teacher is fundamental to learning. Take time to get to know students and demonstrate you are willing to take the time to appreciate their interests.*